



Play Biting

Puppies bite or mouth as a normal and natural way for puppies

- to learn about others & find out about the world
- to instigate or continue play
- to chew – which is a soothing calming behaviour for dogs
- to get free from restraint
- to relieve discomfort from teething, hunger, frustration etc

Puppies' teethe until about 5 months old – it can be painful and they need to soothe sore gums: try offering frozen kongs, and chew toys to alleviate pain.

Puppies learn bite inhibition by playing with other puppies – with people they need to learn that biting or mouthing is never acceptable - they need to learn to play with toys instead of biting us.

Adult dogs play what they played when they were puppies – act now – you need to avoid an adult dog bite!

Young Puppies strategies:

Toy Play

- use a soft toy large enough to avoid bitten figures
- keep toy moving, keep body parts still! Try putting toys on a length of string or a lead to increase distance from fingers
- Always have a toy on hand with a very young puppy. Use the toy to block the puppy from biting

Stop and stand still or walk away if puppy gets too excited or shows unwanted behaviour such as biting hands near toy or ignoring the toy to bite you or your clothing instead.

Handling

- Practice calm handling sessions – reward the puppy for not biting or mouthing at hands. Mouthing in this instance is not play but about trying to get free.
- Persevere with gentle handling and rewards to prevent this behaviour escalating or becoming normal

If the problem persists:

- Check that play at home is appropriate – reduce child/ dog interactions by giving the dog an alternate activity when kids are about such as a kong or food toy
- Check that everyone is playing by the rules (no rough play by dad!)

Strategies for older dogs/ persistent offenders

- Ignore, stand up and move away
- Yelp! - this gives feedback that it hurts
- Use a house line – a thin indoor lead which works like a training lead – you can prevent the dog moving by standing on it or wiggling it to get his attention
- Wear gloves!

Your puppy should grow out of this behaviour, but by minimising the opportunity you will definitely speed it up!